

Methods to Detect Mineral Trespass

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field offices often discover fluid mineral trespass cases without conducting any inspection or investigation, specifically when the operator “self-reports” to the BLM after it discovers that its production zone is not within an approved lease. Notwithstanding these self-reported instances of mineral trespass, BLM’s Petroleum Engineers, Geologists, and other staff working in the BLM’s drainage and Indian diligence programs are best positioned to identify situations where an operator is producing from Federal or Indian mineral estate without legal right; i.e., trespass cases. The BLM’s drainage program already requires a review of all state and private wells drilled adjacent to leased and unleased Federal and Indian mineral estate (BLM Manual Section (MS) 3160-2 *Drainage Protection*, 2.2(A), pp 2-3), thereby providing a method for discovering mineral trespass. The BLM offices should review mineral trespass cases concurrently with reviews for drainage cases and document their reviews in their drainage case tracking spreadsheets.

The resources used for identifying mineral trespass cases are similar to those used to identify drainage cases, including reviewing and comparing the following information and data:

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mineral ownership layers.
- Information Handling Service Markit’s (IHS) commercial off-the-shelf software drilling permit data. The IHS permit data links to existing GIS ownership layers for review.
- State drilling permit information. Ideally, the State permits would include a GIS layer for directional and horizontal wells.
- State well completion, deviation survey, and production data.
- AFMSS databases for identifying approved APDs.

Please refer to MS 3160-2 for additional resources and guidance to detect these cases.